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Gov. Daugaard Joins Colleagues In Highway Funding Request

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard has joined seven other Midwestern and Western Governors in urging federal approval by Sept. 30 of a multi-year funding measure for highways and transit projects.

Meeting the transportation needs of rural states with thousands of miles of highways but few people is a challenge, the governors said in a letter to President Obama and congressional leaders.

“Some of the nation’s lowest-populated states see some of the highest volumes of freight,” the letter said. “Passing a multi-year federal transportation authorization bill would ensure economic prosperity; access and connectivity for people, goods and services; support tourism; increase safety and personal mobility; and provide for the national defense.”

In addition to Gov. Daugaard, the letter was signed by Govs. Jack Dalrymple, North Dakota; John Hickenlooper, Colorado; Mary Fallin, Oklahoma; Gary Herbert, Utah; Brian Sandoval, Nevada; C.L. “Butch” Otter, Idaho; and Christine O. Gregoire, Washington.

Gov. Daugaard said South Dakota’s portion of the current federal highway program is less than 1 percent, and maintaining that share is crucial to both the existing and future highway needs of the state and nation.

“Two-thirds of the truck traffic in this state does not originate or reach its destination in South Dakota,” he said. “While interstate commerce is essential, so are the travel needs of South Dakotans for business and leisure.”

Rural highways help deliver agricultural crops and livestock to market, are pathways to South Dakota’s many tourist attractions, and link people to their jobs, essential services and extended families, Gov. Daugaard said.

“It is imperative that South Dakota not lose any of its federal highway funding,” he said. “Simply put, in a rural state such as this, our road system is an essential transportation lifeline.”

Gov. Daugaard also conveyed highway funding concerns to U.S. Rep. John L. Mica, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, during a meeting in Pierre on Friday, Aug. 19.